

**From:** Pamela Gilmer [pgilmer@wise.k12.va.us]

**Sent:** May 13, 2008 09:40

**To:** vchec

**Subject:** no coal-fired plant, please

According to an article in the March 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Kingsport Times News* from the Associated Press, lobbyist for big business (such as Dominion Power) have been trying hard to block new, tougher limits on air pollution. They maintain that paying for these kinds of emissions controls would not only be costly, but also have an adverse effect on the economy. While this may sound like a valid concern, we must not fail to remember that the injury to human well-being and health by heavy pollutants in the air is also extremely costly. Lost days of work, hospital bills, medical bills, medical equipment and prescription drug costs, as well as the cost to insurance companies must not be ignored when figuring in the price we pay. Can anyone put a limit on the price of averting a heart attack, asthma, bronchitis, various other respiratory ailments, mental retardation and even death, due to toxins created by these polluting businesses?

The article states clearly that: "EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) said last summer that the current health standard-no more than 80 parts of ozone for every billion parts of air-does not provide needed protection against asthma, heart attacks and respiratory problems." In addition to this, the article further reveals that: "...a reduction to 70 parts per billion could result annually in 2,300 fewer nonfatal heart attacks, 48,000 fewer respiratory problems, acute bronchitis and asthma attacks; 7,600 fewer respiratory related hospital visits, and 890,000 fewer days when people miss work or school."

Another excellent point made in this article is that the hardest hit, according to health experts, are the very young and the very old who are more susceptible to respiratory illnesses and other maladies.

Janice Nolen of the American Lung Association is also quoted in this article. She states that through reducing the pollution in the air, we will also reduce the number of ill effects that the pollution causes. Cutting down on the level of pollution would mean more people would be able to work or go to school routinely. More people working and staying healthy is not only a benefit to society, but is also a boon to the economy that must not be overlooked or minimized.

In *really* listening to the complaints and concerns of big businesses who are contributing to the problem, it seems the best answer is to do what is in the best interest of the people. I have no doubt that everyone would put the health of their loved ones above anything else in life. We do everything we can to assure that our aging parents and our beloved children are always in a safe environment, yet for some reason, too many are excusing these companies who contaminate the very air we breathe and are unwilling to invest the money to reduce, to the highest level, the toxins they create. Here is an example of what I am trying to say. Recently, Dominion Power agreed to cut down more on mercury levels for the proposed coal-fired plant in Virginia City. Of course, that is good news for all of us, but my question is: if they could find a way to do this **now**, why didn't they plan to do that to begin with? You can guess that the answer is connected to the money it costs to put in the necessary equipment to make these reductions. Can you imagine knowingly putting your loved one in harm's way if you could do anything to reduce that danger? Wouldn't you pay any price to assure their best protection from harm? Sadly, this is NOT how big business operates.

In my opinion, keeping citizens healthy and keeping them at work or in school will help our economy in the long run. Cutting down on the number of health related problems will have a positive impact on our environment, our health, and our pocketbooks. What price are you willing to pay for health and a good quality of life for yourself and your loved ones? We will all breathe easier if Dominion loses this battle.